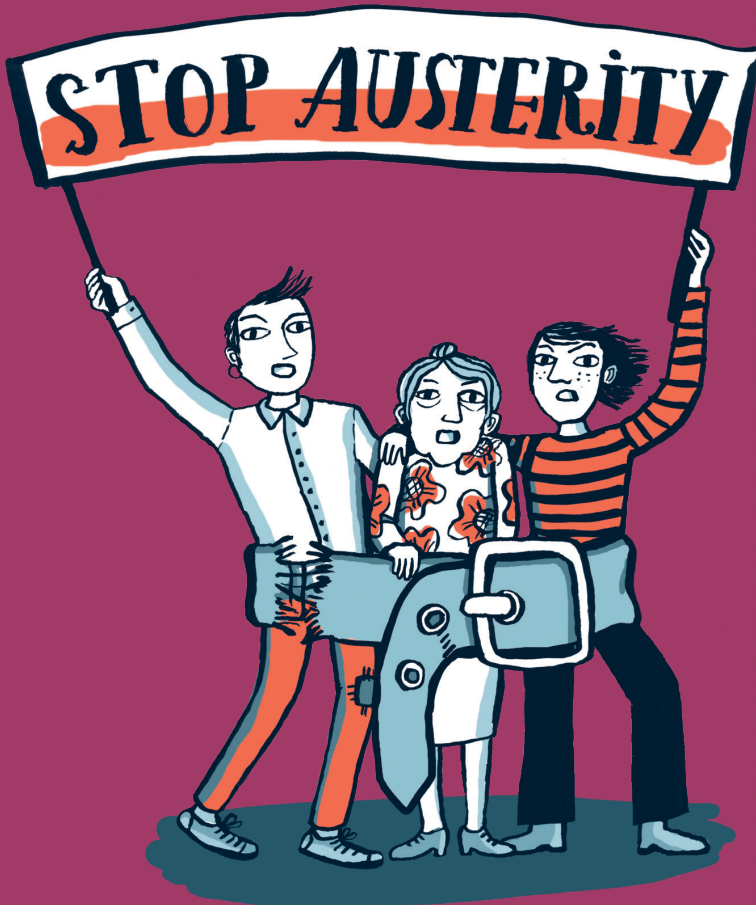


SPAIN

AUSTERITY, GENDER INEQUALITY AND FEMINISM AFTER THE CRISIS

Economic Boom, Recession and Recovery in Spain: the Permanent Care Crisis and its Effects on Gender Equality. The Search for Feminist Alternatives.

Inés Campillo Poza



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Introduction

The international financial crisis that started in the US in 2007 hit the Spanish economy hard, accelerating the housing market's collapse and increasing unemployment and the risk of poverty. The Socialist government's initial response was to expand deficit spending through Keynesian measures. However, in spite of this approach, the Spanish unemployment rate doubled in just two years, rising from 9.6% in the first quarter of 2008 to 19.8% at the beginning of 2010. By the spring of 2010 the European Union intensified its pressure on Spain and in May that year the Zapatero Socialist government approved the first package of austerity measures, which included public sector pay cuts, freezing pensions and cuts to gender equality and care policies. Austerity measures strengthened during 2011 and 2012, with two labour market and pension reforms, and they aggravated rather than improved the economic situation of the country. In fact, the unemployment rate reached its peak in 2013, at 26.9%.

Initially, the economic crisis affected men more markedly than women, as the destruction of jobs affected firstly the male-dominated construction sector. But soon the consumer-goods industry and market services were affected and the unemployment rates of men and women got closer. However, if the destruction of employment has hit men and women alike, austerity has had a far greater impact on women and gender equality, deepening the imbalances present prior to the outbreak of the crisis. The elimination of the Equality Ministry, the removal of the so-called baby check, the introduction of serious cuts to the budget devoted to the Dependency System, the suspension of the Educa3 Programme aimed at investing and expanding the early educa-

tion and care system, healthcare cuts and the introduction of co-pay in certain areas, the freezing of public sector hiring, civil servant pay cuts and increased hours, the labour market and pension reforms, all of these measures mainly affect women who are the main providers of both formal and informal care.

Since 2014, macroeconomic data seem to be pointing to an end to the recession, and governmental appearances and the media are now flooded with this recovery discourse. In fact, in its latest annual assessment of the Spanish economy (July 2017), the IMF praised Spain for its “impressive” economic recovery and strong job creation. But, as the last FOESSA report has highlighted, macroeconomic data are not a good measure of social progress (FOESSA 2017). The truth is job creation is mainly restricted to non-standard (poor quality) employment (such as temporary jobs, deregulated part-time jobs, false self-employment¹), so it is destroyed as fast as it is created. And the unemployment rate is still 16.5% (fourth quarter 2017). In fact, the number of households with all their active members unemployed has increased, up to 1,210,500 households, 310,200 of which are single-person (mainly women’s) households. According to the latest Life Conditions Survey (2016) carried out by the Spanish National Statistics Institute, the poverty rate has increased and also the number of households having trouble making ends meet, no wonder child poverty rate has increased substantially (40% of children in Spain live under the poverty line according to the latest Unicef report). So it seems that the economic crisis and the austerity measures introduced over the last few years have subverted the balance of power in society, dispossessing the many, with enormous social and gender effects.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first describes how the economic crisis has progressed in Spain since 2008. The second section provides an account of the austerity measures and the regressive body policies that have been introduced during the period 2010-2017. The third section sets out to assess the impact of the crisis, and the policy responses introduced to allegedly fight against it, on the situation of

¹ In Spain a false self-employment refers to those workers who are pushed to become self-employed workers when, in fact, they are working for a single employer. It is a way for a company to lower the cost of hiring, by transferring the payments of taxes and Social Security to the workers.

women and gender equality. The four reviews the main feminist struggles against austerity and body policies during the period. The final section describes how austerity has transformed the Spanish political scene, offers some recommendations to build a feminist alternative to austerity and analyses which political allies the feminists may count on when building that alternative.

The Spanish Crisis or the Crisis of a Macroeconomic Model

At the turn of the 21st century, Spain was considered a role model in financial circles. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) itself showed a certain fascination with the rapid growth of the Spanish economy and the overall health of the Spanish public finances (IMF 2000, p. 3). In fact, if one reviews the traditional economic growth indicators, international admiration seems hardly surprising. From 1995 to 2007 Spain was growing at an average annual rate of nearly 4%, above the European average and well above the rest of Southern Europe (World Bank 2017). Government deficit was greatly reduced and was even turned into surplus during 2004-2007 (OECD 2017). Employment experienced an unparalleled expansion: eight million jobs were created, most of them in the service sector. The employment rate increased from 48.3% in 1995 to 66.8% in 2007, and it was female employment growth that accounted for most of that expansion. Indeed, it grew at a yearly mean of 3.5 from 1995 to 2007, increasing from 32.5% to 56% (OECD 2017). The increase was even higher for younger cohorts: the employment rate of women aged 25- 54 grew from 40.3% in 1995 to 66.3% in 2007. Even maternal employment grew considerably, reaching its peak (61.3%) in 2008 (Campillo and Armijo 2017).

Nevertheless, the international financial crisis had a violent impact on the Spanish economy: between 2008 and 2009 the GDP fell by nearly 6%, unemployment doubled, rising from 9.6% in the first quarter of 2008 to 19.8% at the beginning of 2010, and domestic demand shrunk. The IMF warned about the sombre outlook (IMF 2009, p. 9).

In just a few years Spain had gone from being cited in financial circles as an example of economic growth to being derogatorily depicted as a “PIIGS” country. How could this have happened? The truth is that Spain was a giant with feet of clay. Its economic growth model had been faulty, based on a property bubble that took the ever-increasing value of private assets, low interest rates and consumption growth for granted. Indeed, the share of workers employed in the construction sector decreased from 12.9% in 2007 to 5.5% by 2016 (INE 2017). This ‘virtuous circle’ concealed some economic imbalances: high private indebtedness, high unemployment rates, a huge increase in non-standard employment (Sola *et al.* 2013), a stagnation in wages, and trade deficits. But it also concealed some social deficits: stalled social spending, late youth emancipation, and a care crisis, which was due to the increasing participation of women in the labour market and the increasing care needs of an ageing population, combined with an insufficient development of care policies and the precariousness of domestic workers (López and Rodríguez 2011; Pérez 2006).

When the international financial crisis hit Spain, the first reaction of the Socialist government was not austerity, but fiscal stimulus, in line with the Keynesian tradition. However, even if the GDP seemed to experience a slight recovery in 2009 (Del Pozo and Martín 2013), the unemployment rate hit 19.8% at the beginning of 2010. Public spending grew sharply, mainly as a result of bank guarantees and bailouts and the increase in unemployment coverage spending. The general government deficit rose to 9.38% in 2010 (OECD 2017). Yet Spanish public debt was well below those of the rest of Southern Europe (66.6%, versus 127% in Greece, 124.9% in Italy and 104% in Portugal) and even below the Franco-German axis (84.5% in Germany and 96.8% in France) (OECD 2017).

In any case, although Spain's main problem was clearly private rather than public debt, the sovereign debt crisis in the peripheral Eurozone countries had a huge impact on the country, as rating agencies doubted Spain's solvency and downgraded the Spanish debt-bond. Additionally, by mid-2009 the pressure of the European Union shifted from bank-rescue packages to austerity via fiscal consolidation and structural reforms (López and Rodríguez 2013, p. 22). Faced with both

financial and political pressures, in May 2010, just two days after an extraordinary ECOFIN meeting, Zapatero presented the first package of extraordinary austerity measures to Parliament to be implemented in Spain in 2010-2017, flip-flopping on his government's prior strategy to deal with the crisis. In the following years, more severe cutback and structural reforms were implemented and yet the risk premium of the Spanish bond continued to increase, reaching its peak in July 2012. It dropped afterwards, not as a result of austerity, but as a consequence of the European Central Bank (ECB) decision to intervene in the bond market (Del Pozo and Martín 2013).

So the austerity agenda in Spain was mainly imposed through the pressure of the so-called "Troika", that is, the European Commission, the ECB and the IMF. It was a clear policy U-turn that disguised the socialisation of the banking sector losses as the only appropriate response to an alleged extravagant lifestyle prior. The first austerity package was followed by further unpopular measures and structural reforms (labour market, pensions), culminating in the reform of article 135 of the Constitution, which institutionalises budgetary stability. This is a clear case of an austerity measure going further than demanded, but was justified then as sending the proper message of confidence to Europe and the markets. The reform was passed in September 2011, with the approval of only the Socialist and Popular Parties, while outside Parliament the 15M movement, which emerged on 15 May 2011, just a week before the local and regional elections, protested the "marketcracy". It would mark the definitive separation of the Socialist Party from its traditional electoral base and would force elections to be moved up to November 2011, in which the Popular Party won an absolute majority.

Despite furthering the path of austerity, the Partido Popular has managed to remain in office ever since, even if it now rules with a minority government. The alleged economic recovery and the relative "break" from the austericide agenda that the long electoral period of 2015 and 2016 brought seemed to throw a temporal lifeline to the conservative government. However, now that we have a new relatively stable state government, austerity is back on the agenda, as proven by the 2018 State General State Budget and the central government's

intervention in the Madrid local government's budget after having breached the "spending rule". The Catalanian crisis seems to have penalised the Partido Popular, while Ciudadanos has capitalised on the discontent of Spanish nationalists. Meanwhile, unemployment rates are still very high and labour precariousness continues to increase. It is hardly surprising that, according to the latest barometer from the Spanish Sociological Research Centre, the intention to vote for the PP has decreased by seven points since the 26 June 2016 general elections (CIS 2018).

*¡No es una crisis, es una estafa!*¹

The policy responses: austerity and body politics

In the following sections, I will review the main policy responses that were implemented since 2010 in three key areas of government action: employment and working conditions; welfare policies; and gender equality and body politics. Those responses have focused on three objectives: achieving fiscal consolidation through cuts to public spending; promoting structural reforms; and boosting a traditional (gendered) national Catholic ideology.

2.1 Employment and working conditions

2.1.1 LABOUR MARKET REFORMS | A peculiarity of the Spanish economic crisis has been its profound impact on employment. Unlike other countries, millions of jobs have been lost since 2008. This has been due in part to the structural weaknesses of the Spanish labour market: high incidence of non-standard employment, segmentation and inefficient public employment agencies. The two structural reforms of the labour market implemented since 2010 were allegedly aimed at tackling these deficiencies and promoting job creation. However, in reality both reforms responded to the traditional demands of business organisations and international institutions, such as the IMF and the OECD, and to the European Union's austerity agenda.

The first labour market reform (Law 35/2010) was approved by the Socialist government in September 2010, against the votes of most political groups, including the PP, who would approve an even further-reaching new law just a few months later. This Law 35/2010 includ-

¹ "It's not a crisis, it's a scam" was a popular slogan in the 15M movement.

ed three controversial measures: it extended the use of the “contract for the promotion of indefinite hiring”, which is a second-rate indefinite contract with lower severance costs for dismissal; it recognised the negative economic situation of the company as an objective cause for lawful dismissal; and it allowed employers to substantially modify, on the grounds of economic causes, working conditions (transfers, work day, schedule and distribution of shifts, work system and functions), including refusing to apply the salary charts negotiated in the sectoral or branch collective bargaining agreement. The approval of this labour reform triggered a general strike.

The second structural reform of the labour market (Law 3/2012), approved just a few months later by the new Conservative government, was a more profound reform, which further fostered employers’ flexibility and reduced workers’ power. Firstly, it increased both the age of the applicability of the training contract up to 30 and its duration (from a maximum of two to three years). Secondly, it partially liberalised the placement agency sector. Thirdly, it created a new type of indefinite contract, the ‘indefinite contract to support entrepreneurs’, with a longer probationary period (a year versus six months or less). Fourthly, the law included more measures to promote companies’ internal flexibility, such as prioritizing company-based collective bargaining agreements over sectoral or branch agreements, permitting employers to opt out of collective agreements and to modify employees’ working conditions, including requiring overtime in part-time contracts. Finally, the reform reduced the dismissal costs of indefinite contracts (33 days severance pay per year worked, versus the previous 45 days, and a maximum of 24 monthly payments, instead of the previous 42) and increased the causes for objective dismissal (employee’s lack of adaptation to technical modifications, and employee absences, even justified, when they are 20% of working days in two consecutive months or 25% in four non-consecutive months in a year). This reform was the cause of the second general strike (on 29 March 2012) in 18 months.

2.1.2 PUBLIC SECTOR COMPANIES AND WORKERS | Alongside these structural reforms, employment and working conditions have also been the target of one-time fiscal consolidation measures. The first of this kind

was directed at the public sector. The Strategy for a Sustainable Economy, approved in November 2009, and other subsequent legislation pushed for streamlining public administrations, the reduction of public bodies and companies and the privatisation of public companies. Indeed, in 2016, there are 2,425 public companies, 233 less than in 2011 (Pampillón 2016). The Immediate Action Plan 2010 approved in January 2010 restricted public jobs offered to a 10% replacement rate for all levels of administration. This replacement rate was only raised to 50% for essential services such as education, health services, universities, state security forces and bodies in the 2015 General State Budget. Thus, in 2009 there were 3,106,100 people employed in the public sector in Spain, while that figure was down to 2,929,500 in 2014 and then recovered slightly in 2017 (INE 2017).

Public sector employees (in all levels of the administration) have also seen their wages and working conditions downgraded. In May 2010 their wages were cut by 5% on average, in 2012 one extra (monthly) pay slip was eliminated and from 2011 to 2015 their wages were frozen. Only in the last two years have public employees enjoyed a 1% wage rise. Along with wage cuts, the 2012 General State Budget included an increase in their hours (from 35 to 37.5 hours a week) that has not been reverted.

2.1.3 DOMESTIC WORKERS | At the bottom level of the labour market, domestic workers have, however, seen their working conditions improved since 2011, even if that is not saying much given that their starting position was so unprotected. Royal Decree 1620/2011 and Law 27/2011, inspired by the ILO Convention 189, modified domestic workers' working conditions and their right to social protection. Those laws partially equalised them with the rest of workers, especially with regard to the formalisation and physical copy of the contract and their inscription in social security, wage regulation, hours and some social protection rights. The special social security regime for domestic work was abolished and domestic workers were finally included in the general social security regime, even if under a special system. Now domestic workers have the same rights as the rest of workers to pensions and temporary disability. Nevertheless, they still lack the right to unemployment. Along with the lack of entitlement to unemployment benefits, the new

regulation does not address other deficiencies that have yet to be resolved: the opt-out clause introduced by the 2012 reform, the situation of live-in domestic workers and the possibility of contract termination due to *desistimiento* or the employer's subjective loss of confidence in her employee (Díaz and Fernández 2016).

2.2 Welfare policies

The Spanish welfare state has vastly eroded as a result of the large number of fiscal consolidation measures and structural reforms it has experienced since 2010. It is doubtful that it can recover from them, as it seems a neoliberal regime change from above is under way, even in the present recovery phase (the 2018 State General State Budget and the government intervention in the Madrid local government's budget seem to prove this). As I already mentioned, the public sector, including the welfare areas of education, health and social services, has been downsized dramatically, which, along with other cutbacks, has undoubtedly affected the scope and quality of public services.

2.2.1 HEALTH SERVICES | During the first half of 2010, the Socialist government approved two measures (Royal Decree 4/2010 and Royal Decree 8/2010) to cut pharmaceutical spending by 2,800 million euros. The savings came from reducing generic or patented drug prices and adapting drug packages to how long the treatment really lasted. Those could be truly considered streamlining measures. Social spending in health decreased by 8.2% in 2011.

Two years later, the PP government carried out a structural reform of the healthcare system (Royal Decree 16/2012) to reduce its budget by 7,000 million. This decree suppressed the universality of the public health system by eliminating coverage for irregular immigrants over 18 (they could only receive attention in emergencies, pregnancies and births) and by introducing (little progressive) co-pay for drugs (even excluding some from public subsidizing, such as drugs to treat minor diseases) and certain "accessory" health services, such as ambulatory prostheses and non-urgent health transportation. Likewise, the privatisation of health services has been promoted. The government of Madrid region alone privatised six public hospitals in 2012.

2.2.2 CARE POLICIES | The field of care policies, which were developed to a certain extent in the period prior to the crisis, has been one of the most affected by austerity policies. The first austerity package implemented by the Zapatero government already cancelled some of the policies developed in 2004-2008. The 'baby check', a one-time payment for childbirth or adoption of 2,500 euros, was eliminated. The paternity leave's extension to 28 days, which was approved by the Parliament and supposed to take effect in January 2011, was cancelled. This extension was finally implemented in January 2017 as a result of the agreement between Ciudadanos and the Popular Party for Mariano Rajoy's vote of confidence in Parliament, after the general elections of 26 June 2016.

Early education and care has also been targeted by austerity. The *Plan Educa3* was set up in 2008 to develop early education and care services in line with the coverage objective marked by the European Employment Strategy. It envisaged an investment of 1,087 million euros from 2008 to 2012 to promote the creation of 300,000 places for children under three (*El País*, 30 August 2008). The aggravation of the crisis after 2010 and the decrease in contributions paid by the regions into the state coffers ruined the plan's objectives, which just before the November 2011 general elections had managed to create 72,548 new openings, covering 3.9% more children (González 2016). In Spain, regional and local authorities are responsible for this sector and they have tended to maintain services at the expense of an increase in prices and a deterioration of quality through its privatisation, introducing economic competition clauses, reducing caregivers' wages and working conditions, increasing class sizes, etc. (León 2016).

A long-term care system, called the System for the Promotion of Autonomy and the Care for Dependency, was being implemented when the crisis broke out. The Law 39/2006 of Autonomy Promotion, approved by the Socialist government, acknowledged that population ageing is a challenge in a society where women have already joined the job market. The aim of this system was to promote women's employment by extending universal social services. However, from the very beginning it was hardly a universal system as it established restrictions and conditions to be a beneficiary: nationality (or a certain amount of

years of residency), permanent situation of dependency, assessment procedures and degrees of dependency and co-pay.

The system was defective from the beginning, but was completely put on hold and has been cut back since 2010. As the President of the State Association of Directors and Managers of Social Services declared in a Parliament Equality Subcommittee a few years ago, the progressive reduction of these rights and funding has entailed “the controlled demolition of the law” (Cortes Generales 2013: 30): the monetary benefit to be cared of by a family member has been reduced 15% to 30%, the social security benefits the state paid informal caregivers was cancelled, the integration of moderate dependents into the system has been postponed, recipients’ payments have been increased, retroactive payments had been suspended and compatibility between services has been eliminated. In total, the dependency budget has been cut back by 3,734 million euros since 2012 and there still are 341,301 people on the waiting list (Plataforma Impacto de Género Ya 2017).

2.2.3 EDUCATION | In the field of primary, secondary and tertiary education, social spending dropped 24% between 2009 and 2014 (Lago 2016: 22). A big part of that decrease was the result of the PP government passing Royal Decree 14/2012, which envisaged a 20% increase in class sizes, an increase in teacher’s classroom hours, a university fee increase, a policy of not covering medical leaves under two weeks long and so on.

2.2.4 UNEMPLOYMENT | Unemployment coverage was also cut in 2012 (Royal Decree 20/2012). The amount of the contributory benefit was reduced from 80%-60% of the replacement rate to 70%-50%, and the non-contributory benefits became proportional to the prior type of working day. This has resulted in lower rates of coverage: in 2010, 79.8% of unemployed people were covered by some kind of unemployment benefit while this rate was down to 55.6% in 2017. This means that today there are more than one and a half million people unemployed not receiving any unemployment coverage at all.

2.2.5 PENSIONS | Two reforms have been pushed through since 2011. Law 27/2011 increased the number of years working (and paying into the system) needed to receive a full pension (from 35 to 38.5), raised the retirement age to 67 and extended the basis to calculate the amount of the pension to the last 25 years of work. To offset this tightening up of conditions, which has major effects on women, the reform introduced some measures to compensate women leaving the job market to care for their children, providing them an extra 270-day contributory period per child, with a maximum of five years. Likewise, periods of reduced working time and wages due to childcare are made equal to full contributions.

On the other hand, the second reform (Law 23/2013) exempted pensions from being adjusted for inflation and introduced a sustainability factor that linked the amount of the pension payment to life expectancy. This sustainability factor will come into effect 1 January 2019 and will be revised every five years. In 2019 it will already mean a 0.5% cut to all pensions (CincoDías, 31 January 2018).

Apart from these reforms, it is worth mentioning that since the PP government first arrived in power, it has deprived the Social Security Reserve Fund² of most of its reserves, which have dropped 87.9% (eldiario, 1 December 2017). This has led to a debate about the sustainability of the system as it is, based on contributions, and about alternative ways to fund it, such as by introducing one or more new taxes.

2.3 Gender equality and body policies

2.3.1 GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER VIOLENCE | From 2004 to 2009, the Socialist government boasted of having gender equality as prime policy priority. However, as soon as the austerity agenda was imposed by the Troika, gender equality seemed to turn into a luxury that could no longer be afforded. The first package of austerity measures implemented in May 2010 included the elimination of the recently created Equality Ministry; in the same vein, some regional governments eliminated

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 2 The Social Security Reserve Fund, popularly known as 'the pensions' money box', was created in 1997 to collect surplus from the Social Security System and save it to guarantee future payment of contributory pensions.

their regional equality bodies (Murcia, Galicia, Madrid) or stopped processing regional equality policies (Catalonia, Cantabria, Balearic Islands) (Paleo and Alonso 2014). Current equality laws and programmes, such as Law 3/2007 for Effective Equality between Men and Women, are not being applied and are not worth the paper they are written on. The state budget for gender equality has been dramatically decreased, from 43,240 million euro in 2008 to 19,741 million euro in 2017 (Plataforma Impacto de Género Ya 2017). For their part, between 2008 and 2014, the Autonomous Communities reduced their funding for equality programmes by 34.4%, even if there are great differences between the regions (Paleo and Alonso 2014).

Law 2/2004 of Integral Protection Measures against Gender Violence is not being enforced, and the state budget for gender violence prevention and services has also been cut, from 31,077 million in 2010 down to 27,728 in 2017.

2.3.2 BODY POLICIES | While gender equality policies and bodies were eliminated or put on hold and budget cutbacks were introduced, maternalist and “pro-life” discourses entered the political agenda. At the state level, the PP won the 2011 general elections with a programme that envisaged a radical reform of Law 2/2010 of Sexual and Reproductive Health and of Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy, which guarantees the right to choose to interrupt pregnancy within the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. The abortion bill presented by the Minister of Justice Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón in December 2013, very tellingly called “for the protection of the conceived child and the rights of pregnant women”, proposed to go back to a law based on limited conditions, basically rape or serious health risks for the mother. Foetus malformation was not included in these conditions, which went pre-1985 legislation. At the regional level, eight Autonomous Communities approved laws on the protection of pregnant women (Paleo and Alonso 2014).

The impact of the crisis and the policy responses on women and gender equality

According to the **Global Gender Gap Index**, which assesses gender-based disparities in four key areas (economic participation and opportunities, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment), gender gaps in Spain have only slightly widened since the outbreak of the economic crisis and the implementation of austerity policies. In fact, Spain had quite similar scores from 2006 to 2016, but dropped 18 places, from being ranked 11th to 29th, mainly as a result of other countries' improvements. The area where the Spanish gender gap deteriorated the most was political empowerment, whereas the index showed a reduction of gender disparities in economic participation and opportunities. The counterintuitive fact that the 2016 index showed just a slight deterioration of gender equality and even an improvement in the economic area should be explained further (World Economic Forum 2016). As we shall see in this section, the economic crisis along with the austerity measures over the last eight years have had clear and profound gendered effects. It is true that the gender gap in most traditional indicators of economic participation (labour force participation and labour segregation) has been reduced; however, this cannot be considered a success for gender equality since it has been the result of a significant deterioration of the economic situation of men (González 2016).

To nuance the results of the Global Gender Gap Index as well as other gender (in)equality indexes, in the present section I will assess the effects that the crisis and the austerity measures implemented have had on women and gender equality in Spain. Following a modified version of the typology proposed by Lina Gálvez (2013), we will see how the policy changes and cutbacks introduced in the three areas

covered above have mainly had four kinds of impacts: a further precarisation of female employment; an intensification of women's work; a further privatisation of the responsibility for one's life; and a reduction of women's capacity for agency.

3.1 FURTHER PRECARISATION OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT | With the economic boom, employment experienced an unparalleled expansion (see Figure 1); nevertheless, the positive indicators concealed huge imbalances.

Figure 1: Employment rate (15-64) by sex in Spain and EU-28, 1995-2016

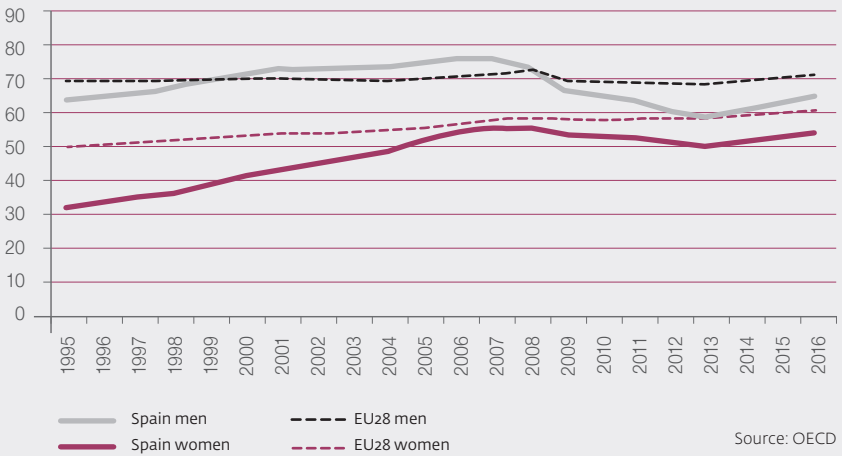
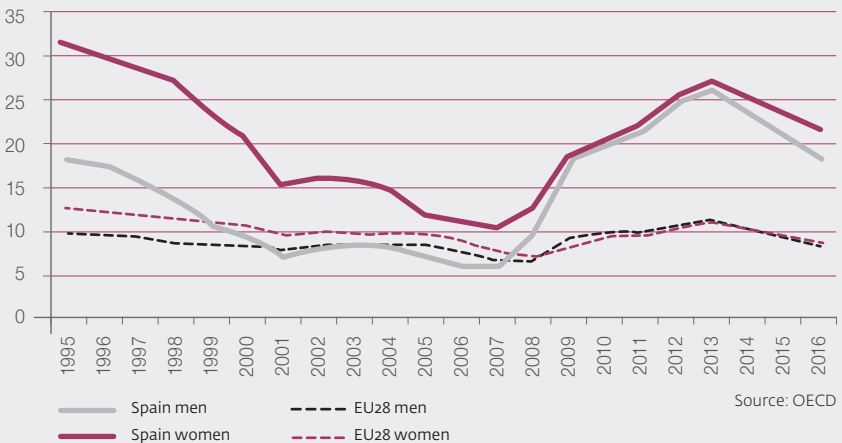


Figure 2: Unemployment rate (15-64) by sex in Spain and EU-28, 1995-2016



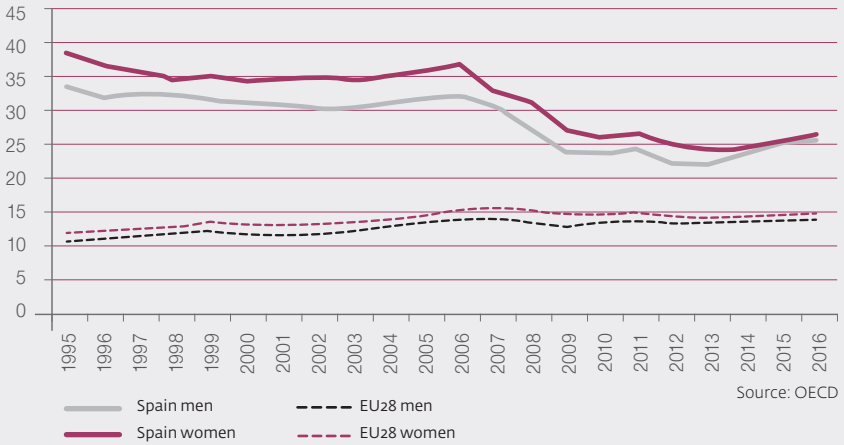
Despite their reduction, unemployment rates remained fairly high during the whole period, especially for women (the lowest female unemployment rate was 10.7% in 2007) and young people (already around 19% from 2005 to 2007). The gender gap in unemployment was huge at the beginning of the expansion period (nearly 13 points in 1997-1999), but after that it decreased steadily (see Figure 2).

Strong job creation was largely based on the spread of short-term jobs, whose prevalence far exceeded that in most European countries (see Figure 3).

On the other hand, compared to other European countries, and despite some governmental efforts (Act 15/1998, Act 39/1999, Act 12/2001 and Act 1/2011) along the lines of European recommendations, the weight of both total part-time and female part-time employment was relatively limited throughout the expansion period. Female part-time employment was around 20% from 2005 to 2007, seven points behind the EU-28 average. And it has increased to 23% in recent years coinciding with employment shrinking and the implementation of the 2012 labour market reform (see Figure 4). The relative low incidence of part-time employment in Spain until quite recently is partly the result of the fact that involuntary part-time has traditionally been high, more than double the European average (in 2005, 32.6% of Spanish female part-timers were so involuntarily, versus 18.4% of their European counterparts; in 2016 that rate hit 61.2% in Spain and 23.5% in EU-28) (OECD 2017). This suggests that in a country characterised by a precarious labour market, low wages and poor welfare benefits, low-paid part-time jobs do not meet household's economic needs, and even less so in a period of crisis, austerity and wage devaluation.

This brings me to my fourth point: the evolution of wages and gender wage gap. During the whole period of the Spanish economic boom, the average annual wage (at 2016 constant prices and NCU) barely changed, going from 26,055 euros in 1995 to 26,175 in 2007. On the other hand, the gender wage gap (for full-time employees and the self-employed) went from 17.16% in 2002 to 13.50% in 2006 and further decreased during the first years of the crisis (reaching a minimum of 8.5% in 2011-2012); however, it has been increasing slightly again since 2013 (OECD 2017).

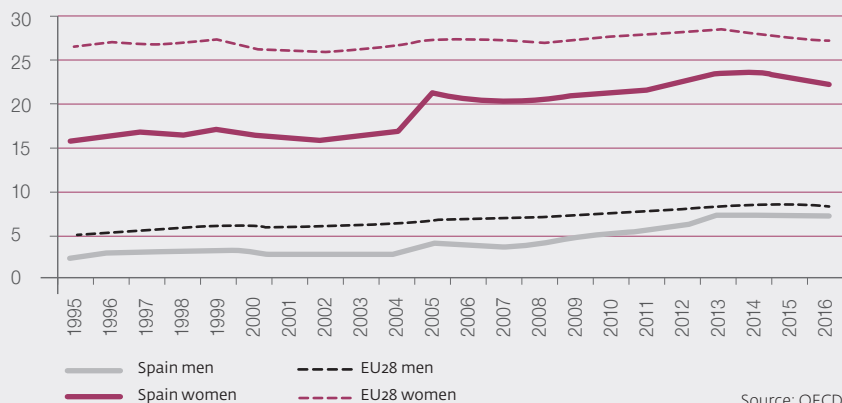
Figure 3: Temporary employment (15-64) by sex in Spain and EU-28, 1995-2016



Lastly, on the bright side, it should also be acknowledged that during the expansion all these labour market imbalances coexisted with progressive developments in the field of equality and work-family balance. Working mothers gained relevant equality and work-life balance rights during this period (such as prenatal test leave, risk during pregnancy leave, pregnancy leave paid at 100% replacement rate, a more flexible maternity leave, lower contribution requirements to be entitled to maternity leave), and so did working fathers (a 15-day paternity leave was introduced in 2007).

That being said, however, the crisis, the multiple cutbacks and the two labour market reforms introduced between 2011 and 2012 have had serious effects on the Spanish labour market, gravely deepening labour force precariousness. Employment rates kept decreasing after both reforms, and have just slightly recovered since 2014. In the first two years of the crisis (2008-2009), employment loss affected male employment more than female employment, so the gender gap in employment more than halved between 2007 and 2013, and the gender gap in unemployment almost disappeared from 2007 to 2010. However, both gender gaps seem to be slightly widening since 2013, even if they have not reached their pre-crisis dimensions (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 4: Part-time employment (over 16) by sex in Spain and EU-28, 1995-2016



Financial and governmental elites point out that 2014 is the year that marks the recovery of the Spanish economy, “the exit from the crisis tunnel”, as the Spanish Finance Minister usually says. However, as was underlined in the last FOESSA report, traditional macroeconomic data is not a good measure of social progress. The truth is the unemployment rate was still very high in 2017 (16.55%), especially for women (18.35%) and young people (44.1%). And not only that but the incidence of long-term unemployment has increased significantly from 36.6% in 2010 to 42.8% in 2017. In the case of women, that rate hit 51.2% in 2017 (INE 2017). Long-term unemployment entails reduced income, by way of decreasing unemployment benefits, low non-contributory subsidies, or no source of income at all, so it has serious effects on people’s wellbeing and risk of poverty.

Likewise, the truth is that since 2013-2014 employment is being created at the expense of internal devaluation, at the expense of the reduction of business costs and the disempowering of workers, via worse entry conditions and collective bargaining agreements that employers can opt out of at their will (Del Pozo y Martín 2013; Lago 2015). This means that job creation is mainly being restricted to non-standard employment, such as increasingly shorter temp jobs, involuntary part-time jobs and false self-employment. So most employment is destroyed as fast as it is created.

However, public employment replacement rates have been

raised since 2015 and that will likely have a positive impact on job creation as a whole and female employment in particular. On the other hand, the average annual wage at constant prices has increased from 26,175 in 2007 to 27,674 euros. This is likely the result of the fact that wage devaluation has affected the lowest income levels the most. In fact, according to the Wages Structure Annual Survey, the median gross wage in 2015 was 19,466 euros. In that same year, 65.5% of low-income workers were women and 18.2% of working women had incomes from work being paid at less than or equal to the minimum wage (648.60 euros/month) (INE 2017).

As regards collective bargaining and workers' rights, the priority given to company agreements over sectoral or branch ones as well as the opt-out clauses allowed by the 2012 labour market reform have disempowered workers and especially working women. The 2007 Equality Law forced companies with more than 250 employees to implement company-based Equality Plans. The economic crisis and the subsequent labour reforms have given companies the perfect reason not to negotiate or implement them. Equality is now considered a luxury and as such has been erased from companies' agendas (González 2016). Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the formal right to maternity and paternity leave has been maintained and paternity leave has recently been extended to 28 days.

3.2 INTENSIFICATION OF WOMEN'S WORK | Contrary to what happened in past economic crises, this is the first time in history that the crisis has not re-familialised women or, in other words, it has not pulled women out of the labour force back into the family (Gálvez 2013; Walby 2015). It seems that there is no turning back from women's integration into the labour market. In Spain, as in other European countries, even in those most affected by the economic crisis and the austerity policies (such as Greece, Ireland and Portugal), women's participation in the labour force has been increasing continuously for the last decades. In fact, the female labour force participation rate has risen from 47.1% in 1995 to 64.5 in 2008, 69.7 in 2013 and 70.2 in 2016, closing the gap with other European countries and even exceeding the EU-28 average.

Nevertheless, their continuing labour market participation com-

bined with different cutbacks and reforms (wage cuts, increased unemployment risk, unemployment benefit cuts, less control over hours and working conditions, less state support) and rising prices has meant an intensification of women's paid and unpaid work, especially for women taking care of family members and for those who work in the care sector. But this tendency is not easily measurable. There is no updated data available to assess the impact of the economic crisis and the austerity measures on the time devoted to housework and care for family members. Time Use Surveys in Europe are carried out every ten years and the last wave was conducted in 2009-2010, when the crisis had already broken out but most austerity measures had not yet been introduced. It is worth reviewing the evolution of the time devoted to different activities by Spanish women and men since 2002-2003.

Table 1. Time devoted to different activities by sex

	2009-2010	2002-2003	
BOTH SEXES	TOTAL	22h 53'	22h 55'
	Personal care	11h 29'	11h 22'
	Household and family	3h 0'	2h 57'
	Studies	0h 39'	0h 42'
	Paid work	2h 47'	3h 0'
	Free time	4h 57'	4h 53'
WOMEN	TOTAL	22h 53'	22h 51'
	Personal care	11h 26'	11h 21'
	Household and family	4h 7'	4h 24'
	Studies	0h 39'	0h 43'
	Paid work	2h 9'	1h 57'
	Free time	4h 32'	4h 26'
MEN	TOTAL	22h 54'	23h 0'
	Personal care	11h 33'	11h 24'
	Household and family	1h 54'	1h 30'
	Studies	0h 39'	0h 42'
	Paid work	3h 25'	4h 4'
	Free time	5h 23'	5h 20'

Source: Time Use Surveys, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010, INE

As we can see in Table 1, between 2003 and 2010 Spanish women increased their paid work time by 12 minutes, whereas they decreased the

time devoted to the household and the family by 17. Spanish men, on the contrary, decreased their paid work time by 39 minutes, while they increased their time spent on the household and the family by 24. If we take a more detailed look at the time devoted to the various household and family chores (Table 2), we see that there is a sexual division of labour even within household chores, with men devoting the bulk of their time there to cooking, household maintenance, gardening and pet care, shopping, and childcare, while mending clothes, laundry and ironing remain women's jobs. This is in line with the main findings of recent research on the sexual division of labour in the family: the greatest increase in men's contributions to the household in the last decades has been to childcare and, more specifically, to recreational activities (Gracia and Esping-Andersen 2015), while housework remains a very unequal field.

Table 2. Time devoted to different tasks within the household and the family by sex

	2009-2010	2002-2003
WOMEN		
TOTAL	4h 7'	4h 24'
Unspecified activities	0h 15'	...
Cooking	1h 24'	1h 38'
Household maintenance	0h 49'	0h 56'
Clothes mending, laundry, ironing	0h 23'	0h 26'
Gardening and pet care	0h 7'	0h 7'
Construction and repairs	0h 1'	0h 1'
Shopping and services	0h 31'	0h 32'
Household paperwork	0h 1'	0h 0'
Childcare	0h 32'	0h 24'
Help adult members in the household	0h 4'	0h 4'
MEN		
TOTAL	1h 54'	1h 30'
Unspecified activities	0h 4'	...
Cooking	0h 26'	0h 22'
Household maintenance	0h 17'	0h 13'
Clothes mending, laundry, ironing	0h 1'	0h 1'
Gardening and pet care	0h 18'	0h 15'
Construction and repairs	0h 6'	0h 6'
Shopping and services	0h 20'	0h 18'
Household paperwork	0h 1'	0h 1'
Childcare	0h 18'	0h 10'
Help adult members in the household	0h 2'	0h 2'

Source: Time Use Surveys, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010, INE

Even if we cannot measure the impact of the crisis on the division of housework and care in Spain since we do not have updated data we may assume that the unequal picture shown by the 2009-2010 Time Use Survey persists or has probably worsened. According to a study by Gracia and García (2015), partnered heterosexual men only do half the housework when they are unemployed and their partners are employed. When both partners are employed and when both partners are unemployed, women double men's time spent on chores, even if unemployed men devote more time to housework than employed men. If we apply these results to the period of the crisis, the prospects are not very encouraging.

3.3 FURTHER PRIVATISATION OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE'S LIFE | The idea that people's wellbeing and standard of living is a public good that must be promoted or guaranteed by state authorities, which was the fundamental justification for the development of the European post-war welfare states, is no longer a common sense idea. In the European Union, the privatisation of public responsibility has been progressive. The neoliberal activation paradigm has been on the European agenda since the mid-nineties and has implied a transformation of the so-called "European Social Model". Individuals are now considered responsible for their own lives, for their own employment opportunities and labour careers, they must be deserving of the social protection they receive and the welfare states must turn into "enabling" states (Serrano 2007). The crisis opened an Overton window for the implementation of further activation measures and has accelerated previous trends, especially in the peripheral European countries. The labour market and pension reforms, the tightening of unemployment benefit conditions, public sector downsizing and welfare cuts should be all seen as different dimensions of this activation or public responsibility privatisation process. All of them have had serious effects on the wellbeing of people, especially women.

The labour market reforms introduced during this period have deepened labour market dualism, by facilitating employers' use of training and other forms of temporary contracts and part-time contracts with unpredictable overtime. As part-time jobs are highly feminised (72% of Spanish part-timers are women), the deregulation of this

type of contract has serious effects on women's standard of living and control over their working time, and even more so with the devaluation of wages.

The pension reforms have tightened access and made conditions for coverage stricter, linking pension rights to previous employment and earnings more closely. These changes affect women more than men, as their labour market participation is intermittent or less intense and their wages are lower. The 2011 pension reform introduced a few measures to offset women leaving the labour market to care for their children, but those can hardly compensate for the amount of time women spend caring for their children or their lower wages throughout their working life. The average monthly pension in 2016 was 1,220 euros in the case of men, and 768 euros in the case of women, which is very telling of the magnitude of the gender pension gap (UGT 2018).

Cuts to welfare, the privatisation of services and the reduction of public sector jobs have a twofold negative impact on women: a direct one, because they are overrepresented in the public sector (55% in 2017), especially in education, healthcare and social services, so they see their job prospects and working conditions worsened; and an indirect one, because they are the main beneficiaries of public services, which are also essential to their being able to participate in the labour market.

3.4 REDUCTION OF WOMEN'S CAPACITY FOR AGENCY | All the above-mentioned measures, along with the budget cuts in the areas of gender equality and gender violence, the traditional deficiencies of policies in these areas, the new law on abortion and the regional laws for the protection of pregnancy promote gender stereotypes and hinder women's capacity for agency. By way of example, the rate of people at risk of poverty and exclusion from society in Spain has increased in the last seven years, going from 26.1% in 2010 to 27.9% in 2017 but this rate almost doubles in the case of single parent households led by women (51.1%). The main reason for this particular vulnerability is unemployment, as almost 70% of female heads of family have been unemployed for long periods of time (Fundación Adecco 2017). No wonder women have more doubts now when it comes to deciding to get a divorce or report gender violence. The Spanish divorce rate, which was 2.9 in

2006, higher than in other PIIGS countries, shrank to 2.1 in 2009 and is now 2.2 (Eurostat 2018). Formal complaints filed for gender violence went from 135,539 in 2009 to 124,893 in 2013. Since then, they have continued to increase (143,535 in 2016), which may be due to the fact that this violence has lately become a “hot issue” again thanks to the feminist movement.

Feminist resistances and feminist agenda

During the last nine years, political and social actors have confronted austerity and body politics in different ways. In February 2009, when the housing bubble had already burst and unemployment was shooting up, leaving many families unable to meet their high mortgage payments and subject to evictions, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages, popularly known as PAH) was created. The PAH is a grass-roots horizontal organisation that has a fourfold aim: to offer counselling and support, to prevent and stop evictions (since its foundation it has stopped 2,045 evictions and rehoused 2,500 people), to promote mutual aid networks, and to influence the political agenda by fighting the unfair Spanish mortgage law and for the right to housing. Even if not originally feminist, most of PAH members are women and they have a leading role in the platform as spokeswomen, negotiators, civil disobedience organisers, etc., which has been empowering for women inside and outside the organisation. For example, Ada Colau, a self-declared feminist, mayor of Barcelona since June 2015 and firm advocate—along with Manuela Carmena, mayor of Madrid—of the need to feminise politics, was formerly the state spokeswoman for the PAH.

In 2010, the Socialist government's policy flip towards austerity took a while to react to, as it shocked the public and took unions unprepared given their prior fluid relationship with the government. But a general strike was called to be held on 29 September against the recently approved labour market reform and the planned pension reform. According to the CCOO and UGT, the strike was a success and 70% of

workers did not go in. But the truth is general malaise did not turn into mass mobilisation until the emergence of the 15M movement a year later, which would bring with it a sustained wave of social protests.

The 15M movement brought a common sense criticism of both austerity policies and the economic and political regime inherited from the seventies' transition to democracy to the political agenda. Indeed, *Democracia Real Ya* (Real Democracy Now) was one of its first mobilizing slogans. But, as some of the feminist activists interviewed for this paper have pointed out, that common sense was not particularly feminist, especially in its first stages, even if its repertoires of collective action seemed to draw from those of the feminist movement and many feminists did participate in the camps and assemblies.

In the November 2011 elections, indignation about the austerity caused the electoral defeat of the Socialist Party and, paradoxically, the victory with the absolute majority of the conservative Popular Party, which had run for government with an electoral programme that included further austerity measures and a very regressive reform of the Law 2/2010 on Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy.

The thrust of the 15M movement and the recrudescence of the austerity agenda motivated new mass demonstrations against the Conservative government in 2012-2013, such as the various *Mareas* (literally, waves) in defence of public services. Two were the most influential: the *Marea Verde* that brought together teachers, students and parents against cuts in education and a very controversial education law (Law 8/2013, for the improvement of educational quality) and the *Marea Blanca*, that brought together health system personnel, patients and citizens against cuts and privatisations of health services. Feminists took part in the different *mareas*, but also created the *Marea Violeta*, which insisted on showing that austerity did not just respond to a gender-neutral neoliberal agenda, but also to a patriarchal one. The *Marea Violeta* denounced the elimination of equality institutions, the cuts in care and equality policies, the cuts in counselling services for gender violence victims, the closing down of women's shelters, and the Conservative plans to change the abortion law.

However, all the feminist activists consulted for this paper agreed

that the two milestones of the feminist movement during 2011–2017 had been: the campaign against Justice Minister Alberto Ruiz Gallardón's abortion bill, which managed to overthrow both the bill and the Minister; and the record-breaking *Marcha Estatal contra las Violencias Machistas* (State March Against Sexist Violence) of 7 November 2015, which got the Parliament to negotiate and approve a State Pact Against Gender Violence. The peculiarities of both sustained mobilisations were that they took place when the cycle of social mobilisations was ebbing –after the emergence of a new left-wing party, Podemos, at the hands of leftist activists and political science professors, and citizen platforms and their commitment to take over the institutions– and that they were particularly massive, far exceeding the mobilising power of the Spanish feminist movement until then.

The campaign against Justice Minister Gallardón's abortion bill began as soon as the process was announced and the actual bill was as of just an undefined plan. Mobilisation was continuous and growing all over the country from 2012 to September 2014, when the bill was finally withdrawn and Gallardón announced his resignation. The 8 March campaigns from 2012 to 2014 were mainly devoted to that demand: to preserve the right to choose. Indeed, for the first time since its emergence in the seventies, in 2013 the feminist movement of Madrid decided to change the traditional itinerary of the 8 March demonstration and march down the main thoroughfares (Puerta del Sol, Calle Alcalá) downtown, usually reserved for the major left-wing mobilisations (1 May, strikes, 15M). Since then, every feminist demonstration in Madrid now goes down these roads and completely fills them.

But mobilisations for the right to choose were varied and frequent and they intensified in 2013 and 2014: from a *escrache* or protest against Gallardón in his own house, replicating the PAH's main collective action repertoire, to protests in front of the Ministry of Justice building or other regional Justice buildings and courts, to the various mass mobilisations in 2014. The *Tren de la Libertad* (Train of Liberty) state march held in Madrid on the 1 February 2014 was surprisingly massive –gathering tens of thousands of people (El País, 1 February 2014)– but just a week later there were large demonstrations and gatherings in several Spanish cities –around 15,000 people just in Madrid, accord-

ing to its organisers (RTVE, 8 February 2014)—, and again on 2 March, 8 March, etc. Even non-feminists and Catholics were more and more convinced about the inadequacy of the bill: in January 2014, a *Metroscoopia* poll showed that 78% of Spaniards thought the abortion bill planned by Gallardón was unnecessary and 86% of them—even an astounding 68% of PP voters and 60% of practicing Catholics—thought women should be allowed to freely decide during the first weeks of pregnancy (*El País*, 11 January 2014).

It should be mentioned that the mass mobilisations of 2014 benefited from various sources: firstly, the prior wave of the pro-choice movement during 2008–2009, which was a response to the persecution of clinics and doctors by “pro-life” judges and organisations and had kept politically active afterwards, when the 2010 abortion law was being drawn up by the Socialist government; then, the 15M movement, which had politicised new sectors of the population, especially adolescents and young people who were previously disillusioned by politics, and had forged (or renewed) alliances and coordination platforms; lastly, the creative use of communication and information technologies, especially social networks, which had been key tools for the 15M movement.

The 7N movement, for its part, has drawn from the awareness and mobilisation work on gender violence carried out by feminist organisations all over the country in the previous years, especially around the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November). It benefited from the mobilising success of the prior feminist campaign against the Gallardón’s abortion bill. However, unlike most previous, more dispersed, campaigns the 7N Platform emerged from the beginning as a state-wide organisation, which undoubtedly contributed to its visibility. A state *Marcha Contra las Violencias Machistas* (March Against Sexist Violence) was called for it to be held in Madrid on 7 November 2015, a call that was unprecedentedly adhered to by 380 regional and local organisations, 70 state-wide organisations as well as all unions and political parties, including right-wing parties, such as *Ciudadanos* and *Partido Popular*, which was unheard of for a mobilisation called by the autonomous feminist movement. The protest march gathered around 300,000 people, flooding the entire cen-

tre of the city (Cuarto Poder, 7 November 2015). The march was called again on the same day the following year.

The main points of the 7N mobilisations were: gender violence is structural because it is related to a patriarchal system; it goes beyond intimate-partner violence; it is varied, not only physical; all gender violence needs to be prevented and attended to by public authorities, including sexual violence, as required by the Istanbul Convention (2014); victims of gender violence need to be protected regardless of whether they report to the police or not; priority should be given to prevention, which includes promoting a co-educative system and specific training for all the professionals who intervene in the process; imposed joint custody should be eliminated; and abusers' parental rights should be withdrawn (Plataforma 7N 2015).

The main aim of the 7N Platform was for the Law 1/2004 of Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence to be reformed to include the above-mentioned points. A State Pact against Gender Violence, which includes 213 measures, was approved by Parliament at the end of September 2017. Most members of the 7N Platform think this is already a major achievement, as it goes against the current flow of austerity and diminishing rights. However, the pact does not include all the measures that were demanded and did not set a timeline or budget for each of them, which displeased the autonomous feminist movement and led Unidos Podemos to abstain in the final vote in Parliament.

Far from dissolving itself after the approval of the State Pact against Gender Violence, the 7N Platform intends to become stable and to continue to raise awareness and mobilise against gender violence. Even before the *#metoo* movement, the Spanish feminist movement had managed to push sexual abuse (and gender violence in general) onto the mainstream political agenda, as proven by the fact that in the last two years local authorities have been promoting campaigns against sexual assault during local celebrations (*San Fermín* in Pamplona, *Mercè* in Barcelona, Madrid's patron saint celebrations, *Las Fallas* in Valencia, etc.), or by the overwhelming mass mobilisation of the last 25 November.

Apart from the above-mentioned movement milestones, during

the last fifteen years there has been an area of fruitful feminist thought and activism in Spain that is worth mentioning: care work. This was an unresolved matter for the Spanish feminist movement, which had previously focused mainly on the right to choose, gender violence and equal opportunities in employment. The fact that the Spanish feminist movement historically emerged and developed against the backdrop of the traditional Catholic familism may account for its reservations against including the valorisation of care as one of its main demands. However, the issue has been on the feminist agenda for more than a decade now and has taken different forms. On the one hand, feminist economics is an expanding field of research and action: since 2005 there have been five state conferences on feminist economics that have brought together academics and activists alike –around 400 people participated in the last in Vic (AmecoPress, 20 July 2017)– and strive to issue consensus statements and policy proposals. Without a doubt, the demand for equal and non-transferable parental leaves has irrevocably entered the Spanish political agenda thanks to the work of feminist academics and activists, many of whom are members of the *Plataforma por los Permisos Iguales e Intransferibles de Nacimiento y Adopción*, PIINA (Platform for Equal, Non-Transferable Parental Leaves). Indeed, in October 2016, the Spanish Parliament approved a motion to make maternity and paternity leaves equal lengths, with the PP's abstention. Just a few months later, Unidos Podemos, with consultancy provided by the PPIINA, presented a bill on the same topic, but the PP government vetoed its being discussed in Parliament because of its impact on the Social Security budget. However, the government had previously agreed the extension of paternity leaves from 13 to 28 days with Ciudadanos, thus dividing the Parliament majority for making paternal and maternal leaves equal lengths.

On the other hand, the need to make visible, regulate and dignify care work has also been brought to the forefront by the struggles, first, of domestic workers and, more recently, of chambermaids (known as *las Kellys*) and care-givers at nursing homes, which has led some authors to talk about a new type of unionism (Rendueles 2015; Rosa 2016; Sánchez 2017), with women playing a leading role.

Apart from care-work related campaigns, it is also worth men-

tioning that, on 30 November 2017, the Spanish Parliament approved a bill to allow trans people to choose their own gender without the prerequisite of a previous medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

Whereas traditional social movements and left-wing parties are ebbing, unable to inspire hope or mobilise people, an intergenerational feminist movement has been booming in Spain for several years already, able to mainstream certain issues, such as abortion and the right to choose, and gender violence. However, it would be unfair to think that the Spanish feminist movement is just being successful because of certain mainstream or liberal demands; on the contrary, it is being successful despite of, or maybe precisely because of, its radicalism and comprehensiveness, as the success of the 2017 8 March World Feminist Strike and the preparations and mobilisations for this year's 8 March Feminist Strike are showing³. As Ciudadanos leader in Catalonia, Inés Arrimadas, stated, her party is not going to support the 8 March Strike because some of the feminist demands "go against the capitalist system" (eldiario, 1 February 2018).

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3 The 2017 8 March World Strike was called by the international feminist movement following the mass feminist mobilizations which had taken place both the previous years and that year in Poland, Argentina, the USA, Spain, etc. It was a care, consumption and (partial) labour strike organised and called by the feminist movement, which was an unheard event, given that unions are the organisations that can call strikes according to labour legislation. But, despite the rush preparations, in Spain this feminist call dragged the Intersindical union into calling a partial labour strike, thanks to which workers striking were protected by labour law, while the two main unions (CCOO and UGT) declared they supported the strike but did not call it. Both the partial strike and the demonstrations were successful –the one in Madrid was attended by around 500,000 people (El País, 9 March 2017). The 2018 8 March Feminist Strike, on the contrary, is nationwide and has been being prepared since April 2017 through a coordinated state platform that has already met a few times in different Spanish cities –around 400 women, representing more than 100 organisations, met in Zaragoza to organise the coordinated call (El País, 14 January 2018) and around 200 women have been gathering every month in Madrid to organise the strike there (eldiario, 8 February 2018). The aim of this year's feminist strike is to get to stop the country for 24 hours, exceeding last year's follow-up. The feminist call is supported by more than 300 organisations: it counts with the full support of the CGT, CNT and Intersindical unions and of Podemos and Izquierda Unida, whereas the two main unions (CCOO and UGT) and the Socialist Party are calling for a partial labour strike (two two-hour stoppages, one in the morning and one in the afternoon) during the day, under the quite traditional slogan *Trabajos y salarios dignos. Sin ellos no somos ciudadanas* ("Decent jobs and wages. Without them we are not citizens"). The media repercussion of the 2018 Feminist Strike preparations and debates and the successful attendance rate at the preparation meetings and events –such as the 3,000 thousand people who went to a launch party on 11 February in Madrid– make feminists optimistic about the following of the 2018 strike.

4.1 Austerity and the transformation of the Spanish political scene

The austerity agenda was mainly imposed in Spain by the pressure of the Troika. It forced an abrupt U-turn in the PSOE's government policies in 2010 and has since promoted the dissemination of a new dominant moral account of the crisis, one that disguised the socialisation of the banking sector losses as the only appropriate answer to an alleged prior extravagant way of living and spending. "We have lived beyond our means and now we have to tighten the belt" became the motto of political elites, which also pervaded national and international media and common sense discourses. For a year, with the exception of a modestly successful general strike, Spanish civil society was rather muted, seemingly sharing that self-blaming discourse. Despite continuous austerity measures, social movements kept in abeyance. Collective mobilisations were dispersed and unsuccessful, unable to appeal to the average citizen.

Nevertheless, soon the aggravation of both the economic crisis and austerity policies coincided with the discovery of numerous political corruption scandals that affected the two main political parties (PP and PSOE), which resulted in the breaking of that predominant moral discourse and in a growing erosion of the legitimacy of the government and, in general, of the Spanish political and economic elites. The *indignados* or 15M movement was able to channel social unrest and open a continuous cycle of collective mobilisation all over the country. The motto "We have lived beyond our means" was replaced in the

streets and camps by another: “We are not merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers”. From the *Puerta del Sol* camp, occupations of squares followed one another in more than seventy cities and towns throughout the country. By the same token, citizen assemblies and work groups were created in a political effervescence unheard of since the transition to democracy after Franco’s death. As Rendueles and Sola have pointed out, the 15M movement was composed mainly of young middle-class people, with an absolute absence of non-European migrants. However, the movement gained widespread sympathy, with 80% of the citizenry thinking that its demands were fair (Rendueles and Sola 2015).

Nevertheless, the austerity agenda was not put aside and the reform of article 135 of the Constitution was passed in September 2011 without consensus or referendum, with only the approval of the Socialist and Popular Parties, while outside Parliament the 15M movement protested against what they called a “marketcracy”. The mutual understanding of both parties marked the definitive separation of the Socialist Party from its traditional electoral base and forced elections to be pushed up to November 2011. The Popular Party, led by Mariano Rajoy, won the elections by absolute majority and has remained in office ever since.

The 15M movement was able to maintain a continuous cycle of collective mobilisation from 2011 to 2013, but by the end of 2013 it was already showing signs of dying out, not being able to force a change in the direction of the policy responses to the crisis or in the composition of political institutions. In this context, and with elections on the horizon (the 2014 European elections and the 2015 local, regional and general elections), a new political party, Podemos, emerged. Its self-declared main aim was to create an electoral tool that was capable of transferring the common sense spread by the 15M movement into the sphere of institutional politics. Even if the Greek party Syriza was a role model, the communications strategy of Podemos was initially based on the rejection of the Left-Right axis, in line with both the discourse of the 15M movement and Latin American populism. However, the electoral programme of the party was definitely leftist.

The recently founded party surprised the country getting 8% of the votes and five MEPs in the European elections in May 2014. By the

end of that year and the beginning of 2015, Podemos' popularity skyrocketed, with 25-28% of those polled showing them support, whereas intention to vote for the PP and especially the PSOE dropped to 20%, according to *Metroscopia* (Rendueles and Sola 2017). The *surpasso* seemed a real possibility, but it did not come to pass: the results of both the 2015 regional elections (13.9%) and the 2016 general elections (21.1%) were far worse than predicted, even with *Izquierda Unida* joining the electoral platform in the latter case. The relative deflation of Podemos has coincided with the rise of another "new" political party in the centre-right: Ciudadanos. In this way the Spanish political scene, previously monopolised by the PSOE and the PP, has transformed, becoming more plural. However, the rupture that was expected to come about with the so-called "forces of change" has not been happened and seems increasingly unlikely.

In the last three years, the economic recovery, the demobilisation of social movements –with the exception of the feminist movement–, the erosion of Podemos and the Catalanian crisis seem to have thrown the conservative forces, and the Spanish political regime more generally, a lifeline. However, it is worth noting that, unlike what has happened in most European countries, the persistence of the neoliberal austerity agenda, the increase of social inequality and traditional political parties losing ground has not fuelled the emergence or rise of extreme right parties in Spain.

4.2 Building a feminist alternative to austerity

Unlike previous crises, this one is particularly multifaceted: the obvious financial, economic and social crises have coincided and intensified the care and ecological crises already underway. The neoliberal responses to this crisis are not resolving it, but rather deepening its pernicious effects. Building an alternative to austerity is necessary and urgent. Traditional social democratic and second-wave feminist recipes are of no use anymore: they take the abundance of natural resources for granted and they presuppose the centrality of production and consumption activities thereby reinforcing the androcentric valorisation of waged labour and the neglect of non-commodified activities, fundamentally care work (Fraser 2013; Campillo and Del Olmo 2018).

We need to think of innovative solutions to the crisis and, for that end, both feminist and environmental economics offer us a proper toolbox. As Nancy Fraser proposes, we need to “militate for a form of life that decenters waged work and valorises uncommodified activities, including, but not only, carework. Now performed largely by women, such activities should become valued components of a good life for everyone” (Fraser 2013, p. 226).

How could we do this? What would a real feminist utopia alternative to the neoliberal austerity paradigm look like?⁴ Mainstream feminist proposals usually implicitly frame gender inequality mainly as a problem of women not being able to conform to the (male) mould of being in full-time employment continuously over their entire life cycle because their higher dedication to care work –or their greater “burden”– “penalises” them. With that diagnosis, the fundamental measures proposed for ending gender inequality usually are: promoting full-time female employment, the 35-hour work week, making working days more flexible, discouraging part-time employment, introducing equal non-transferrable parental leaves to promote men’s involvement in childcare and universalising early education and care services (from zero to three) with longer hours (see, for example: Gornick and Meyers, 2009; Pazos and Medialdea 2015). These proposals are defended as a way to end both gender inequality and the present care crisis. However, given the present situation of precarious labour markets with longer or non-standard shifts, low salaries, diminishing unionisation, and longer commutes, it is hard to see how the above-mentioned measures could possibly end the present care crisis (or even gender inequality) in dual-earner families, let alone in single-parent families.

The pressing problem is not women’s lesser participation in the job market anymore, but rather the excessive labour dedication of both men and women, which is completely incompatible with caring (and carrying out other non-commodified activities) and leading a good life. So instead of trying to turn women’s lives into what was the traditional life of men (continuous full-time careers), we rather need to make men’s lives look more like women’s, decentring labour markets and

4 In the present subsection I am mostly reproducing the arguments and ideas previously defended (more extensively) in Campillo and Del Olmo (2018).

promoting a more flexible relationship with employment, one which is capable of valuing the varied human activities necessary to human sustainability and which is also more sensitive to the various types of families and the different stages of the life cycle.

Which measures might work in that direction? Without attempting to list them all, first we should separate social protection from paid work. The fact that social rights (pensions, unemployment, childcare, care rights) are mostly linked to our employment status not only reproduces social class dualism, but also gender inequalities, which interact and reinforce that dualism. By way of example, promoting men's equal involvement in childcare is needed and equal, non-transferrable parental leaves may contribute to it. However, as this right by definition depends on having a job and on its quality, it leaves many precarious or unemployed workers –mostly women– without coverage. In 2016, 410,583 babies were born in Spain, but the Social Security National Institute only processed 278,509 maternity leaves, which means that 32.2% of Spanish mothers (and their children) were not protected, be it because they were unemployed with no right to unemployment benefits or they were “non-working”, or because they had not contributed enough to the social security system.

Secondly, we should fight for a radical reduction of the working week: a 20 or 25-hour work week⁵ would allow us not only to redistribute employment, but also for men and women to have more time to care for ourselves and for others or participate in civic life without dying of exhaustion or resorting to a low-paid, unprotected, migrant domestic worker.

Thirdly, we would need not only to further invest in early education and care services as well as home care services for seniors or people with disabilities, but also to think about our model of care services, making it more flexible and adaptable to different family needs, improving class sizes and care workers' working conditions (training, wages, and labour rights in general). The labour conditions and labour rights of domestic workers, and especially live-in domestic workers, which are the most unprotected care workers, should be put on the same level as the rest of workers.

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5 In this sense, see the New Economics Foundation proposal of a 21-hour working week: <http://neweconomics.org/2010/02/21-hours/>

Finally, now that families are smaller and smaller and most of us live in cities, without the support of an extended family or the small town, it seems to me that the education system would be a very relevant field of intervention. We should prevent kids from reaching adulthood without having ever experienced caring for anyone: not only does the formal educational curriculum have to change, but also the hidden curriculum, turning schools into places where older children may learn how to protect and take care of younger children, a dynamic that may counteract the present consumerist and productivist individualism.

4.3 Left actors and potential feminist allies

As we have seen in the previous section, feminism is booming in Spain. In contrast to other European countries equally affected by both the economic crisis and top-down imposed austerity policies, there is no need to generate or enhance feminist responses here as feminism is already alive and kicking, both at the level of theoretical-political thought and at the level of social mobilisation. The call for the 2018 8 March Strike is an illustration of the good health of the movement, but also of the way alliances with other social and political actors usually work and the challenges feminism poses to traditional left-wing actors (political parties and unions) and to the media and public opinion. Both Spanish left-wing parties and trade unions have explicitly supported the strike, but the main unions (CCOO and UGT) just call for a partial labour strike and mobilise under a relatively traditional labour slogan and the Socialist Party (PSOE) seems to side with UGT. We will see if the explicitly declared support translates itself into work and mobilisation within the organisations.

Gender equality has allegedly been on the agenda of Spanish left-wing parties since the late seventies, when equality or women's officers were created in the Communist Party (PCE) and the Socialist Party (PSOE). In the late eighties, a 25% gender quota was introduced to both parties and, a decade later, it was turned into a 40%/60% system. But it was in the late nineties, coinciding with the spectacular increase in women's participation in the labour market and the concomitant rise of female membership in parties and unions, when gender equality inexorably entered the political agenda (Campillo 2013). The

Zapatero government was the first to appoint a gender parity government in 2004 and pushed through an Equality Law (Law 3/2007) that enforced that electoral lists must promote gender parity. This law was approved by all political parties in Parliament except for the Partido Popular. Nevertheless, even this conservative party has tended to appoint rather gender-balanced cabinets since it came to power in 2011.

It is worth noting that female political representation in Spain has greatly increased in the last decade: 39.4% of Parliament seats are occupied by women in Spain, in contrast with the rest of the PIIGS countries, where female representation is lower (18.3% in Greece, 22.2% in Ireland, 31% in Italy and 34.8% in Portugal) (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2017). The political parties with the most female MPs in their ranks are Unidos Podemos (47.8%) and PSOE (42.3%) (El País, 11 August 2016).

As regards the trade union movement, the main Spanish unions (UGT and CCOO) introduced gender quotas in the late nineties, however, these unions are highly masculinised and have focused mostly on traditional work settings and Fordist labour relationships, so they are having trouble connecting with young, migrant and/or female precarious or unemployed workers. Nevertheless, both UGT and CCOO have recently been key actors, along with domestic workers' associations and the feminist movement, in the 2011 reform of the employment status and working conditions of domestic workers, which gives us some hope as to future alliances and collaborations.

Social movements, and especially the environmentalists, have traditionally been allies of the feminist movement, and are now working side by side with it to prepare the 2018 8 March Strike.

The municipalist movements and citizen coalitions that emerged on the eve of the 2015 municipal elections and that came into office in the so-called "cities of change" (Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Valencia, Pamplona, etc.) have become great allies of the local feminist movements. The municipalist movement and the feminist movement in Spain are close to each other both in theoretical and political terms; there is cross-pollination that is resulting in profound changes in local policies with respect to their gender perspective, something which was previously unheard of in the history of local democracy. Some examples of this collaboration are: the gender budgeting policies in

Barcelona, the *Madrid Ciudad de los Cuidados* Plan (Madrid City of Care Programme), the organisation of the 1st Conference on Domestic Work and Care by Madrid's local government, the stress local governments are placing on preventing sexual abuses and hate crimes, the promotion of feminist town planning, etc. Furthermore, in the last two years, the debate around the need to feminise politics –as a way of making it more democratic, more diplomatic and bringing it closer to women and ordinary citizens– has been brought about both by feminist representatives, especially well-known municipal representatives –such as Ada Colau and Manuela Carmena–, and feminist activists.

Finally, even if there is no strong leftist media in Spain, since the outbreak of the crisis some new general-interest newspapers and magazines have emerged (eldiario.es, La Marea, El Salto) that are acting as allies to feminist struggles, giving voice to feminist journalists and including contributions from feminist academics and activists. Likewise, many feminist online news platforms (such as Pikara Magazine) and blogs, as well as feminist “twitter stars” and “youtubers” have emerged in the last eight years, which has undoubtedly contributed to the renewed appeal of feminism to young women.

Spain has experienced a great deal of changes with regard to gender relations in the last twenty years: a spectacular increase in women in the labour force, an increase in divorce, a diversification of family models and behaviours –and attitudes towards them. These changes have been accompanied by the resurgence of feminism, both as a theoretical perspective and as a social movement, which has recently further strengthened as a result of the crisis and austerity and body policies.

The main Spanish trade unions and especially left-wing political parties have greatly transformed and have incorporated gender equality as one of their political objectives. However, political parties, and especially unions, still have a long way to go in changing their agendas to really prioritise gender equality. Their explicit support has not always meant specific enforceable policies or real and sustainable internal changes (in leaderships, organisational structures and ways of doing things) that might point to a clear commitment to feminising politics.

Methodological Annex

This paper has been based on archival research and a review of both quantitative (fundamentally, OECD and Spanish National Statistics Office databases) and qualitative secondary sources (research articles and reports from different organisations such as the World Economic Forum, the Spanish union Comisiones Obreras, the Spanish CEDAW Platform, UNICEF, OXFAM, etc.).

Along with the information obtained through a review of archival and secondary sources, I carried out five semi-structured interviews with key feminist activists and politicians: Haizea Miguela, member of the *Comisión 8 de Marzo*; Clara Alonso, member of both Izquierda Unida and *Comisión 8 de Marzo*; Clara Serra, former Head of the Area of Equality, Feminisms and Sexualities of the state Citizen Council of Podemos and Podemos deputy in the Madrid regional assembly; Henar Sastre, member of the *Plataforma 7N*; and María Luz González, Head of the Women's Organisation of the Intersindical Union.

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Biography

Inés Campillo Poza is a lecturer in Sociology at Comillas Pontifical University and at Suffolk University in Madrid. She received her PhD in Sociology from the Complutense University of Madrid (2013). Her PhD thesis was entitled “Farewell to familiarism? Reconciliation of work and family life policies in Spain, 1997-2010”.

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